

THE JACKMAN TARBURNER ROCK, COLUMBIANA COUNTY, OHIO

by
James L. Murphy
Ohio State University Libraries
1858 Neil Avenue Mail
Columbus, OH 432310

Several pioneer tarburner rocks, carved to serve as drains in collecting pine tar, have been described from Columbiana County (Murphy 1969, 1980; Vietzen 1973); but one of the most elaborate has gone relatively unnoticed until recently.

Shortly before his death in 1986, R. Max Gard, of Lisbon, Ohio, told me of a tarburner rock on the Trotter farm, south of the village of Fredricktown, in southeastern Columbiana County, and suggested that I contact Gary Winterburn of Fredricktown about the precise location. Subsequently, Mr. Winterburn guided me to the spot, which lies at the end of Croxall Road, in the east central portion of Section 11, St. Clair Township, Columbiana County, Ohio.

Here, near the edge of a steep ravine that leads northeasterly to the valley of Little Beaver Creek, a thick ledge of sandstone that probably represents the Lower Mahoning Sandstone of the basal portion of the Conemaugh Group (Stout and Lamborn 1924: 289-91) outcrops along the rim of the valley. The nearly level surface of a large slab of this sandstone has been utilized as a tarburner rock (Figs. 1-3).

The most conspicuous feature of the artifact is a large square depression, measuring approximately 2 m. on a side, carved in the top of the sandstone slab. Deep grooves along two sides of the square depression, as well as a natural central depression in the square, lead to toward one corner, where a broad, shallow trough, semi-circular in cross-section (Figs. 2, 3), continues to the edge of the

sandstone ledge. At the edge, a large, recessed area has been carved, on the base of which are several drilled holes (Fig. 3). This is interpreted as an attachment point for a metal or (more likely) wooden spout that served to extend beyond the edge of the rock and prevent the tar from running down the rock. Height of the rock ledge is ideally suited for placement of a bucket or small barrel under such a spout.

At some point in time, a large crack or crevice developed in the sandstone ledge, which must have terminated use of the tarburner rock. It is possible that this crack was due to intense heating of the rock by the burning of pine boughs on top of it, but this is only one possible explanation, and natural causes might also be responsible.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Jackman tarburner rock is the fact that it was "reworked." Figure 3 shows that initially there was a series of small, pecked grooves uniting to form a small drain, quite similar to those on the tarburner rock at Beaver Kettle Farm, north of Fredricktown (Murphy 1969). Clearly, this initial effort proved to be inadequate, resulting in the more elaborate carved square and trough.

The age of the Jackman tarburner rock remains somewhat uncertain but it could date as early as 1805, when the land was settled by the Jackman family. Scharf and Winterburn (1992), in their history of Fredricktown and vicinity, provide considerable detail about this pioneer Columbiana County family. As early as 1801, Robert Jackman, Jr., investigated

the region for a potential mill site; the swift-flowing waters of the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek proved attractive, and he purchased all of Section 2, including the future site of Fredricktown, in 1801. In 1805, his father, Robert, Sr., purchased all of Section 11, lying immediately to the south of Section 2, probably as an inheritance for his sons (Scharf and Winterburn: 35-36).

Henry Jackman (1774-1882) built a log cabin on Section 11, which stood until only a few years ago on the Trotter farm. It is believed that the tarburner rock was carved and used by Henry Jackman, who inherited that portion of Section 11 upon the death of his father in 1813. Initial use of the Jackman tarburner rock probably dates to the early part of the 19th Century. There is no evidence to suggest how recently it was in use.

References Cited

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Fig. 1 (Murphy) View of the Jackman Tarburner Rock, looking northeast. Ravine in background leads to Little Beaver Creek.



Fig. 2 (Murphy) View of Carved Drain in Jackman Tarburner Rock. Looking southeast. Ledge is ca. 0.3m. thick.



Figure 3. (Murphy) Closeup of Carved drain, showing holes for attachment of wooden (?) spout. Remains of earlier, pecked tarburner carving visible at left.